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ACTION ARA-16

INFO OCT-00 ADS-00 AID-07 INR-10 SS-10 OIC-02 CIAE-00  
DODE-00 H-01 IO-15 NSC-01 NSAE-00 HA-06 L-03  
PM-09 PA-01 SAL-01 ICAE-00 SP-02 SPRS-02 /086 W  
-----313413 251452Z /41

P 242025Z MAR 82  
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2874  
INFO AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO  
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN  
USCINCLANT NORVA

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full

☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 1673

CINCSO FOR INTAFF, CINCLANT FOR POLAD

EO 12065: GDS 3/24/88 (KEANE, JOHN F.) OR-P

TAGS: SHUM, PINT, AR

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF INTERIOR ANNOUNCES PEN RELEASES AND DISCUSSES  
DISAPPEARED AND STATE OF SIEGE

REF: (A) BUENOS AIRES 1594, (B) BUENOS AIRES 1584, (C) BUENOS AIRES  
1606

1. (U) ON MARCH 23 MINISTER OF INTERIOR GENERAL ALFREDO  
SAINT JEAN ANNOUNCED THE RELEASE OF 80 PEN PRISONERS AND  
SAID GOA WILL PUBLICIZE INFORMATION ON THE FATE OF SOME  
OF THE DISAPPEARED. HE ALSO DAMPENED EXPECTATIONS  
THAT LIFTING OF STATE OF SIEGE IS IMMINENT. SAINT JEAN  
SAID THAT, SINCE FEBRUARY, 66 PEN DETAINEES HAVE BEEN  
RELEASED AND 14 HAVE BEEN PLACED UNDER SUPERVISED LIBERTY  
("LIBERTAD VIGILADA"). HE NOTED THAT THIS REDUCES THE  
TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS HELD UNDER ALL CATEGORIES OF PEN  
TO 627, DOWN FROM A 8,737-PERSON HIGH SINCE THE STATE OF  
SIEGE WAS ENFORCED IN NOVEMBER 1974. HE ADDED THAT GOA  
IS STUDYING THE 627 REMAINING CASES AND WILL RELEASE

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ADDITIONAL DETAINEES WHEN AND IF IT DETERMINES THAT  
THE INDIVIDUALS ARE NOT A THREAT TO NATIONAL

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SECURITY. COMMENTING ON WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS THE GOA'S EFFORTS TO REESTABLISH A CLIMATE OF FREEDOM, OPENNESS AND DIALOGUE, SAINT JEAN CALLED ON THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND OTHER GROUPS TO SHOW GOOD SENSE AND RECIPROCATATE THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITIVE ATTITUDE, ESCHEWING "RADICAL" STATEMENTS AND CRITICISM.

2. (U) IN SUBSEQUENT Q'S AND A'S, SAINT JEAN SAID THAT GOA WILL PUBLICLY RELEASE INFORMATION "ON THOSE PERSONS ALLEGED TO HAVE DISAPPEARED WHOSE SITUATIONS HAVE BEEN CLARIFIED." HE SAID THAT THE FAMILIES OF THESE PERSONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN INFORMED AND THAT THE NUMBER OF SUCH CASES ARE "NUMEROUS". (NOTE: THE INTERIOR MINISTRY FOR SEVERAL YEARS HAS HAD AN OFFICE TO WHICH RELATIVES OF THE DISAPPEARED DIRECT THEIR INQUIRIES). HE DECLINED TO REVEAL THE TOTAL NUMBER OF RESOLVED DISAPPEARANCE CASES, ARGUING THAT "WE HAVE TO FIX A DATE WHEN DISAPPEARANCES BEGAN AND ALSO A CLOSING DATE...SO THAT WE CAN DETERMINE WHAT THE NUMBERS ARE WITHIN THOSE DATES." SAINT JEAN ALSO DECLINED TO DISCUSS THE EXISTENCE OF A SO-CALLED "WHITE PAPER" CATALOGUING CASES OF DISAPPEARANCES. REMARKS BY SAINT JEAN LAST WEEK INDICATING THAT A "WHITE PAPER" HAD BEN PREPARED FOR PRESIDENT GALTIER RAISED EXPECTATIONS THAT THE GOA WAS READYING TO PUBLISH DETAILED AND COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION ON CASES OF POLITICAL DISAPPEARANCES.

3. (U) REGARDING THE STATE OF SIEGE, SAINT JEAN NOTED THAT HIS RMARKS AT A PRESS CONFERENCE LAST WEEK WERE MISINTERPRETED BY SOME OF THE MEDIA. (SOME  
[REDACTED]  
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NEWSPAPERS ALLEGED THAT HE INDICATED A LIFTING OF THE STATE OF SIEGE WAS IMMINENT BUT SEE REF C). SAINT JEAN EMPHASIZED THAT THE STATE OF SIEGE WOULD BE MAINTAINED AS LONG AS SECURITY CONDITIONS WARRANT IT. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT HIS MINISTRY IS EXPLORING WAYS TO APPLY "RESTRICTIONS ON LIBERTIES SELECTIVELY TO THOSE WHO THREATEN NATIONAL SECURITY," TO REPLACE "THE STATE OF SIEGE WHICH AFFECTS ALL ARGENTINES."

4. [REDACTED] COMMENT: UNTIL RECENTLY, THE GOVERNMENT MAINTAINED THAT IT HAD NO INFORMATION TO OFFER ON THE FATE OF THE DISAPPEARED. NOW, THE GOVERNMENT IS

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PROMISING TO MAKE AVAILABLE WHAT INFORMATION IT CAN ON THE FATE OF THE MISSING. THIS IDEA WAS FIRST PUT FORWARD BY SAINT JEAN IN A MARCH 8 PRESS INTERVIEW AND SUBSEQUENT STATEMENTS WHICH WERE INTERPRETED AS A GOVERNMENT OFFER TO GIVE FAMILY MEMBERS THE INFORMATION IT HAS ON CASES WHICH HAVE BEEN "CLARIFIED." IT APPEARS THAT THE GOA IS CONSIDERING PROVIDING INFORMATION ON CASES IN WHICH (A) THE REPORTED DISAPPEARED PERSON DIED IN CONFRONTATION WITH SECURITY FORCES, AND (B) THE ALLEGED DISAPPEARED PERSON IS LIVING ABROAD. SOME NEWSPAPERS AND POLITICAL LEADERS COMPLAINED THAT THIS INFORMATION SHOULD BE MADE PUBLIC AS WELL. SUBSEQUENT COMMENTS BY SAINT JEAN INDICATED THAT THE GOA WAS CONSIDERING SUCH A PUBLIC RELEASE, BUT HE THEN RAISED EXPECTATIONS EVEN FURTHER BY HIS REMARKS ABOUT THE SO-CALLED "WHITE PAPERS". CAREFULLY LIMITING THE GOA COMMITMENT TO RELEASING INFORMATION ONLY ON THOSE CASES WHICH HAVE BEEN "CLARIFIED" - THE NUMBER IN THIS CATEGORY IS PROBABLY SMALL - SUGGESTS BACKPEDDLING BY SAINT JEAN DUE TO MILITARY UNEASE, BUT IT IS, NONETHELESS, A POSITIVE EFFORT TO HELP DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF THE DISAPPEARED.  
SHLAUDEMAN

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